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INTERNAL REFORMS IN ROMANIA

ANNCR:

ROMANIA'S PARTY AND STATE CHIEF NICOLAE CEAUSESCU, WHO HAS IN THE PAST COMBINED A DEGREE OF INDEPENDENCE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS WITH STRICT ADHERENCE TO COMMUNIST PARTY DOCTRINE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS, IS PUSHING SOME INTERNAL REFORMS. VOA NEWS ANALYST JOHN ALBERT HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT:

VOICE:

ROMANIA IS THE ONLY EAST EUROPEAN COMMUNIST COUNTRY WHICH MAINTAINS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH BOTH ISRAEL AND ARAB STATES. AND NOT LONG AGO PRESIDENT CEAUSESCU JOURNEYED TO PEKING FOR PROLONGED DISCUSSIONS THERE, SOMETHING NO OTHER EAST EUROPEAN CHIEF OF STATE WOULD BE LIKELY TO DO. MISTER CEAUSESCU'S RECENT TRIPS TO WASHINGTON AND BONN ALSO UNDERLINED HIS INDEPENDENT STANCE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

BUT THIS POLICY HAS ALWAYS BEEN BALANCED BY AN INTERNAL STYLE OF INTOLERANCE IN THE AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND COMMUNIST DOGMATISM IN ECONOMICS. INDEED, NONE OF THE VARIOUS INTERNAL REFORM IDEAS TRIED IN OTHER EAST EUROPEAN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES WERE ACCEPTED IN ROMANIA. NOW, APPARENTLY IN RESPONSE TO POOR IMPRESSIONS ABROAD, ALONG WITH SIGNS OF INTERNAL LABOR UNREST, AS INDICATED LAST YEAR BY A MINER'S STRIKE, HAVE APPARENTLY MOVED THE ROMANIAN PRESIDENT TOWARD SOME INTERNAL REFORMS. FOR EXAMPLE, ON THE QUESTION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES -- THE APPROXIMATELY TWO MILLION HUNGARIANS AND THE FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND GERMANS LIVING IN ROMANIA -- RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH WEST GERMANY CHANCELLOR HELMUT SCHNIDT AND HUNGARIAN COMMUNIST PARTY CHIEF JANOS KADAR APPEAR TO HAVE CONVINCED MISTER CEAUSESCU THAT CERTAIN CONCESSIONS ON LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION ARE IN ORDER. HOWEVER,

EMIGRATION IS STILL NOT LOOKED ON WITH FAVOR.

AS TO ECONOMIC REFORM, EXCESSIVE CENTRALIZED CONTROL HAS NOW BEEN OFFICIALLY CRITICIZED, AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES ARE SUPPOSED TO GET MORE FREEDOM OF DECISION. ALSO, FOR THE FIRST TIME, THERE'LL BE BONUS PAYMENTS FOR WORKERS. FURTHER, THERE WILL BE GREATER EMPHASIS ON THE AMOUNT OF GOODS ACTUALLY SOLD.

MATERIAL INCENTIVES FOR WORKERS -- SOMETHING NEW IN ROMANIA -- HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN DECIDED ON TO IMPROVE INDUSTRIAL PERFORMANCE. WHILE OFFICIAL STATISTICS SPEAK OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION SURPASSING ESTIMATES FOR 1977 AS A WHOLE, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ADMITTED THAT IN VARIOUS KEY AREAS ANTICIPATED PRODUCTION FIGURES HAVE NOT BEEN REACHED. ALSO, INVESTMENTS ARE REPORTED TO BE FALLING BEHIND, ALONG WITH NATIONAL INCOME. ELECTRICAL ENERGY AND COAL PRODUCTION HAVE FALLEN OFF AS MUCH AS TEN PERCENT.

THERE HAVE BEEN MAJOR SHORTAGES IN AGRICULTURE. SO, TO ALLEVIATE THE SUPPLY PROBLEM, THE PRIVATE INCENTIVE IS TO BE INCREASED. PRIVATE PLOTS FOR EACH MEMBER OF THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITIES HAVE BEEN INCREASED FROM 800 SQUARE METERS TO 1500 SQUARE METERS. ALSO, EACH FAMILY CAN NOW MAINTAIN THREE COWS, AS WELL AS 15 SHEEP OR GOATS.

MANY FOREIGN OBSERVERS BELIEVE PRESIDENT CEAUSESCU IS SERIOUS ABOUT CREATING REAL CHANGE. THEY POINT TO HIS LARGE-SCALE SHIFTS OF PARTY AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. LATELY, MORE THAN 20 PARTY AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN REPLACED; WITH PEOPLE SAID TO BE MORE COMPETENT. HOWEVER, THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS THAT RELAXATION IN ECONOMIC POLICY IS A PRELUDE TO GREATER INTERNAL POLITICAL FREEDOM.

WJL/RCS